

# FATED OR FREE?

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PRESTON WILLIAM SLOSSON

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# FATED OR FREE?

## A Dialogue on Destiny

BY

PRESTON WILLIAM SLOSSON



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TO  
MY FATHER AND MOTHER

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## FOREWORD

In recording this little dialogue there has been no thought of proving any thesis or even of discussing a great question with the fulness it deserves. The aim has simply been to present as forcibly as possible the various objections which have been brought against the doctrine of free will from several different points of view and to see what answers a defender of the doctrine could offer. Originality for most of the arguments on either side cannot be claimed in a question which has been discussed so often, but I think that fairness in stating both sides of the question may be. The working out of this little discussion has been a source of great pleasure to the writer and it is the whole of his hope that it may prove of some interest to the reader; if not in itself, at least as a starting point for the reader's own thoughts on the subject.



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## *DRAMATIS PERSONAE*

MR. JAMES B. FREEMAN, the indeterminist.

DR. CLIFFORD OWEN DENKER, professor of logic.

PROF. HUXLEY KOHLENSTOFF, professor of physics.

PROF. WARD M. MANTELLER, professor of sociology.

DR. EDWARDS C. GOTTLIEB, a Presbyterian minister.

MR. P. MEREDITH RITER, a novelist.

MR. JAVERT LAWES, warden of the state penitentiary.

MR. DEWEY SMITH, a practical man.



## THE FIRST QUESTION

*Can there be cause and effect if the will is free?*

KOHLNSTOFF. Found! A man who believes in chance and in the twentieth century at that! My dear Freeman, as a member of the educated class you should have left all that behind you several centuries ago.

FREEMAN. Didn't you tell me only yesterday (granting yesterday for the sake of argument) that time had no real existence? In that case what difference would the mere dating of our arguments make?

DENKER. This difference, that the progress of science has made it harder and harder to get up a serious argument about free will. Twenty years from now you will wonder at having ever questioned the laws of the world in which you live and with which your scientific training should have made you familiar. Perhaps you will say that free will leaves us with most of the cosmos intact. You cling to a little strip of chaos as a drowning man clutches at a straw, but without his excuse. This will not serve you! A semi-cosmos is just as absurd

a contention as universal chaos; once you admit the very idea of law, it obtrudes itself everywhere. Our whole mental life is bound up with ideas of cause, origin and the "reason why" of things. Whatever is must have its reason for being or else how should it be? Suppose we say that the cause of any event was an act of will. Very good, but what, then, is the will? Did the will create itself? Let us grant this for the moment. Whence came the causing will, the previous self? Grant that this again is the product of free will and of nothing else. In the end we simply pursue our inquiry back to birth. Thus all free will turns out in the end to be nothing but our original endowment, heredity in short. Possibly you believe in pre-existence and would pursue the inquiry still further. But, quite aside from the absurdity of the idea of pre-existence, you have gained nothing by the move. The chain of causation still continues to hold. No wonder; it is an endless chain. We cannot so much as think "event" without at the same time thinking "cause."

Let us look at the other horn of the dilemma a moment. If the will does *not* cause the will, what does? The environment? Then you give up free will at once. God? That would be sheer miracle. Suppose, then, that the will has no cause. Then your will may be

free, it is true, but it is no longer a will since the agent is completely divorced from his own act. Who would want a will that he couldn't control and might go off like an "unloaded gun" any minute? By taking that road you lose the very moral responsibility for which you were aiming and gain nothing, since this mysterious force which came unannounced into the mind like a thief at night must itself have a reason for being. All roads lead to one goal, the impossibility of chance. Chance does not have to be disproved; the mere statement of the question disposes of it forever.

FREEMAN. And yet even the Calvinistic theologian admits the existence of a "first cause," and free will is nothing more than a case of that.

GOTTLIEB. Surely, you cannot intend to argue from the freedom of God to that of man. In making God first cause we deny the existence of any other first cause whatever. Man's will is but a channel of the divine will and has no existence of itself apart from its great Source.

FREEMAN. I was not arguing from God to man. I merely wish to point out that it is not candid to call an idea "inconceivable" when it is a fundamental thought in the minds of millions of persons including some of the staunchest determinists.

DENKER. Oh, yes, the theologians may all dream of "first cause," but that doesn't satisfy me. Here is your dilemma; I state it again,—either we cause our own actions and so they are not free, since we ourselves are the result of the interplay of heredity and environment, or else our wills are influenced by some unknowable factor outside the self entirely, in which case our acts are no longer ours at all. Until you have dehorned this dilemma, I forbid you to proceed.

FREEMAN. The only way to do that is to look at the act of will itself and see if it is really so incredible that our acts may be part of our very selves and yet be free. In the meanwhile I wish to say that I am bearing the burden of proof only for courtesy's sake, since he who wishes to prove a whole cosmos determined in every part from all time to all time has a much bigger task than he who would merely maintain the possibility that something "new" might possibly occur while allowing any amount of practical power to the determined forces of nature.



## THE SECOND QUESTION

### *Can freedom be responsible?*

KOHLNSTOFF. As I see it you enter the discussion with the best half of your case already surrendered. You will have some trouble in establishing a psychology with room in it for both freedom and responsibility, even if you follow the usual freewillist course and make it up to suit yourself.

FREEMAN. I agree that the will is not free if it is entirely determined by the nature of the willing self. Free will, if it has any meaning, must refer to the starting of a new series of causes and effects,—an act of creation, in short. How about responsibility for our own acts in that case? To answer this question we must look a little closer at that double-faced word “chance.” If you mean by the word that a free act cannot be entirely accounted for by the knowledge of previous causes, I agree. But to most people “chance” means something else, the breaking into the will of some outside force beyond our control. The freeness of the will means nothing of the sort.

It is the action of the previous self but not the result of its nature. In most cases a single strong motive will over-ride all obstacles and appear at once as action. But a complex of motives may check and counteract each other. This mutual checkmate brings about a sort of vortex of mental indecision. This is a moment of the intensest consciousness we know, what we call "making a decision." At this moment the will is driven in on itself and then, if ever, choice may really occur. If this is a true analysis of an act of will, then it may be free, since in the balance of motives only the spontaneous attitude of the will itself can determine the event; it is also responsible, since no outside factor interferes to impel the will to its decision. Now, whether this self-choice can ever occur is another question. But if it can, you must yourselves admit that freedom, in the sense of absolute novelty and real alternative possibility, and responsibility, in the sense of the autonomy of the individual will, not only do not conflict but imply each other, since the creative will and the independent self are identical. Upon no other theory can we have real moral responsibility. On the determinist theory, as Denker has already made so clear, the willing self is determined from everlasting to everlasting and is but an instrument in the hands of nature, a channel of eter-

nal cosmic energies. To speak of responsibility in such a universe is to glove the iron hand of fate in conciliatory phrases. Besides even if some brand of "soft determinism" could conserve responsibility, the question of fact would still remain and freedom would still be the happier alternative. The real gain of the indeterminist theory is the idea of true alterability, of immeasurable because undetermined possibility. The keen joy of living in a universe of an indefinite number of ways of possible growth and change is, to say the least, as great as the sterner joy of ethical self-government. I admit that the truth of free will is an open question, but about its desirability there is no question at all. Of course, if the universe is determined, we must face the fact and make the best of it. We are men, not ostriches.

## THE THIRD QUESTION

*Would the truth of free will affect natural science?*

KOHLNSTOFF. Freeman has been kind enough to define "free will" for us, and now all that remains is to disprove it. This is less hard to do since he has had some scientific training. If free will were true, science would be impossible, since the success of an experiment would be no warrant for its success upon repetition. We find chance nowhere in our dealings with nature. Neither with dead or living matter, in the field of the telescope or in that of the microscope, has anyone yet found an exception to the causal law. Chance is driven to lurk in the realm of psychology because it has been driven out of every other branch of natural science successively. Its skulking and crouching within the precincts of a new and complex science where it is the hardest definitely to disprove will not save it long from utter extinction since almost all trained psychologists reject this dogma. If nothing else, the law of the conservation of energy

would settle the question. Every act involves energy. A "free" act would mean that this energy came from nowhere and did not previously exist in any form, since, if it did, the existing energy would be the efficient cause of the act. But perhaps, since you make bold to deny the law of causality, you will have no scruples as regards the law of the conservation of energy. We may get you to deny the law of gravitation yet, should it be luckless enough to be in the way of your argument.

FREEMAN. It is true that the indeterminist defines causality a little differently. Denker would have the law read: "Everything has a cause which completely accounts for its nature." I should rather put the matter as: "Everything has a cause, but under certain conditions a complex of causes might produce more than one possible effect." If to redefine a law is to deny it, then denying its laws is a large part of the business of every science. But the law of causality is the only natural law I can think of which free will need change in the slightest. It may be true, of course, that the law of the conservation of energy has exceptions or is wrongly phrased. But no free-willist is forced to hold this position. We do not know that the will (or indeed any conscious state) is what we call "energy" at all. Even if it is, why should an extra amount of energy

be required to make an act of will indeterminate?

KOHLNSTOFF. But what use would freedom be if it were confined to consciousness? To accomplish anything an act of will must have physical effects. And how may a physical occurrence take place without the expenditure of energy? Do you mean to hold the position that matter uninfluenced by mind is itself capable of free and responsible action?

FREEMAN. I grant you that it would not be probable. But cannot the mental act of willing *release* energy without itself using any? A sort of catalytic action of consciousness might determine the action of the energies of the brain which produce action without the change of consciousness itself meaning any loss or gain of energy. Or, again, consciousness may itself involve a kind of energy capable of self-transformation without any other gain or loss than the usual degradation of energy in all action, free or not. These are two of the ways in which the law of the conservation of energy may be reconciled with free will.

DENKER. Reconciling free will with it, you mean; the laws of nature will not make way for you or any of your theories.

KOHLNSTOFF. You said, Freeman, that causality is the only law of nature which the indeterminist is compelled to deny,—or re-



formulate, if you insist. We contend that to be logical you must reformulate (or in plain English smash) all laws whatever. Upon causality rests the whole structure of science, for if science cannot predict it can do nothing. Now just why are we to look for miracles in consciousness, when all our science exists just because they can't be found anywhere else? And why, if chance exists in consciousness, shouldn't it be found elsewhere as well? Do you confine miracles to the field of consciousness to save them from the attack of exact science, or from fear that if they got loose in the physical universe, they might ravage the entire cosmic order? I don't know which motive is the stronger with you, but I am certain that the arbitrary line you draw between the fields in which miracles can happen and those in which they can't is traced rather by hope and fear than by logic.

FREEMAN. We do not hide indetermination in the field of consciousness merely because (as you suggest) it can there find safe harbor until psychology has become an exact science like chemistry. We simply look for it where it most likely would be found, supposing it to exist. The human will is certainly the most complex, individualized and unpredictable fact that we know anything about, and, if anything is indeterminate, it is. Any simple system

would pass over to a determined form at once; an indetermined system must be very complex and delicately balanced to have more than one future state open to it. Now, the facts which we call "effort," "doubt," "attention" and "deliberate decision" testify to the uniquely balanced and unstable nature of the will. Again, an indeterminate system of facts must have some sort of independence as to its environment or else its immediate surroundings will determine every change. The personal consciousness is the only group of facts we know even relatively independent of immediate environment. Finally, an indeterminate system would be hard to reduce to rules and to predict with certainty. Deduction is easy in mathematics, where we deal with abstract forms and numbers. It is not so easy in the natural sciences which deal with matter, still less so in those which deal with life, and not at all easy in those which deal with man. In man unpredictability of conduct is lowest in the custom-ruled savage and highest in the "erratic" genius. All this increasing difficulty of prediction, of course, does not prove free will; it only opens a wider and wider door for its possibility.

The absence of "miracle" in external nature (if you insist upon that word) is of no concern to the indeterminist, for he only looks

for freedom where it might possibly be found. Suppose there is indetermination farther back in evolution than man, exact science need have no fear, since the amount of error introduced must be far below the margin of error of even our most exact calculations. So the "absolute regularity of the laws of nature" does not concern the freewillist even if it does exist, and it should not perturb the natural scientist even if it doesn't. To be sure, free will would prove embarrassing to an exact sociology, like Professor Manteller's, which has the ambitious ultimate aim of writing history in advance with a certainty not approached by our present knowledge of the past. But I doubt if such a sociology is possible even on determinist grounds, and, until his aim be achieved or at least seriously attempted, the social sciences, like the physical, may freely admit free will without endangering their methods or results. Even psychology will find the belief no obstacle unless it claims certain prediction of everything any individual will ever do. "Free will, the enemy of science," is a bogie which has been used with some success in keeping thinkers from even considering the possibility of indeterminism, but it is the emptiest scarecrow in all philosophy. The more science is able to discover and predict, the better the freewillist is pleased, for there is neither hope

nor fear that we shall be able to pack the universe into a single formula, and until this is done by somebody free will cannot be disproved.

DENKER. If free will is as harmless (and in consequence as useless) as you say, how can you explain that modern science and philosophy have so strong an objection to the doctrine? Here we are debating this question, seven of us determinists and only one to uphold free will. Would not the same general proportion hold wherever scientifically trained men debated the question? Of course we cannot decide a question like this by any appeal to authority, but when the whole weight of science and critical philosophy is against a belief there is at least a presumption that it is unfounded.

FREEMAN. I do not know the opinion of "modern science and philosophy," but if you refer to the opinions of individual philosophers I concede you a large though dwindling majority. Half, if not more, of the determinists take that stand because they fear that any concession to possibility as a real fact in the universe would wreck their science by upsetting the power to predict. I think we may now agree that these fears are absolutely baseless. As for the other half of the determinist ranks, they uphold the belief as a corollary

from some philosophical doctrine which they happen to hold. Materialists and monists generally believe in a rigid and unified world system and are perforce determinists. Their disbelief in the reality or significance of the time process also involves a disbelief in free will, since the remotest future is to them but one thing with the remotest past. Parallelism in psychology usually involves a belief in determinism, since any useful freedom must mean that the will can control some bodily acts. And, finally, those who hold pantheistic, Mohammedan or Calvinistic views in theology must be determinists, since their fundamental religious basis is the absolute power of God and the powerlessness of man. It is not that free will has or can be disproved, but because it is irreconcilable with some philosophical or religious hypothesis, that so many object to the doctrine.

## THE FOURTH QUESTION

*Does natural science disprove free will?*

KOHLNSTOFF. You certainly have taken a tremendous task upon yourself, Freeman! By your own admission you must overthrow parallelism, the great hypothesis without which experimental psychology would be unworkable; root out the basic idea of both idealistic and materialistic philosophy; and, finally, wind up by a grand attack upon the chief religions of the civilized world. The defence of the great religions of law I shall leave to Gottlieb, but I think myself able to discuss the psychology of the matter.

The very possibility of a scientific psychology depends upon our ability to obtain definite reactions to given stimuli. Did mental facts sway the physical reactions which accompany them, no results could be depended upon to hold good for the future. Secondly, if mind and body interact, our whole principle of the conservation of energy goes by the board, since stimulus and reaction need no longer be equivalent if that which is not energy



disturbs their sequence. Thirdly, as we see in cases of hypnotism, sleep and other unconscious or half-conscious states, the body can do very complex acts such as walking, talking and solving problems without calling upon the aid of the mind. Lastly, it is as absurd to imagine a mental fact (such as an act of will) producing a bodily result as to imagine a magician levitating chairs, tables and other human beings by sheer "force of will." If the thought "I will move my arm" can do the work of the muscles or even of the nerves, why cannot a man wreck a train by sitting still and thinking "train jump off the track!" Only like produces like, and only physical causes can have physical effects. As a psychologist, you must know these things and so I merely recall them to your attention. I know that some say that the whole mind and body question is wrongly stated, that matter and consciousness are of one reality compact. But, if so, the mind is fundamentally as much at one with the steam engine as with the cerebral cortex. Whether fundamentally one or no, mind and matter never interact. It takes the primitive imagination of the savage to see any truth in a theory which must involve the grotesque image of a moral ideal pushing brain molecules around or bringing about chemical reactions in a nerve cell.

FREEMAN. To take your points in order, I see no menace to psychology in the theory that mind may have its effect upon matter. Psychology has not reached anything like exactness in the higher levels of consciousness where alone deliberate choice might operate. I have already shown as well as I could how free will and the law of the conservation of energy need not conflict. As to your argument from what the body may do when the level of consciousness is low, only simple and habitual actions ever become entirely automatic. We may walk, talk or even do sums when asleep, I grant. But we all learned how to talk, to walk and to begin our calculations when not only awake but more than usually alert and attentive. All real mental work done when consciousness is at a low level rests upon a foundation of work done when consciousness was intense, at the very period when nerve action almost seems to hesitate and await the command of the conscious will. As to your last argument, it is quite believable that mind can influence a particular form of highly complex matter, such as the cerebral cortex, without having the power to affect crude, unspecialized, "dead" matter, such as the iron of an engine is in comparison with living nerve tissue. Surely the uniquely close connection between the particular bit of matter

in our heads and our consciousness needs no pointing out. To be sure, we cannot, by the mere willing, move our neighbor's arm. But then we are not "hitched up" to our neighbor's brain. We cannot argue from the powerlessness of our mind to influence outside nature to its powerlessness to influence our own bodies.

The interactionist has positive arguments too. The facts of our especially intense consciousness at moments of decision; of the assumption by one part of the brain of the functions of another part which has been injured or even lost; and the close connection between pain and danger to the body all point to an influence of mind on body.

KOHLNSTOFF. Your points are not so hard to meet. Because the mental states of pain, pleasure, attention, inattention and so on are found together with certain bodily states does not prove that the mental facts cause the bodily ones. As to the brain assuming functions lost through injury, nothing is more natural to anyone acquainted with the delicate and adaptable nature of that organ. Consciousness, finally, cannot be indispensable to the performance of bodily functions, for throughout the vegetable kingdom and most of the animal, there is probably neither pleasure nor pain operative, and yet development proceeds.

Interactionism, like witchcraft, may be possible; is it, therefore, probable or in any way a useful idea?

FREEMAN. It is certainly a useful idea, for it simplifies the problem of the origin of consciousness by evolution. If the body can act with perfect efficiency as an automaton, why does it not always do so? If the mind cannot by its presence or nature modify conduct and so aid survival, how does it happen that the body has a mind? More important yet is the question why consciousness takes such a form that it seems to be essential to the proper control of the body to insure its survival.

DENKER. Do you regard everything as inexplicable which cannot be shown to be a case of natural selection? Has consciousness no function but to keep the body in good condition? If you must go into metaphysics, why ask "why has the body a mind" rather than "why has the mind a body"? The latter is just as much an argument against parallelism.

FREEMAN. Exactly so. I do not regard consciousness at all as a means to an end, however. But whatever may be the ultimate aim of the whole process of evolution, and I would phrase it as the strengthening and deepening of consciousness, still improvement always comes in evolution when needed for survival. We may have been given the eye because sight

is a delightful thing. But the point at which the organ appeared was when its function was necessary to aid the organism to avoid distant enemies or to seek distant food. By all analogies, consciousness, or at any rate the peculiar extension of consciousness which distinguishes the higher animals, must have arisen when automatic action no longer secured survival.

## THE FIFTH QUESTION

*What can our consciousness tell us of free will?*

KOHLNSTOFF. Well, parallelism still seems to me the more probable hypothesis. But even if interactionism is true, free will is as far from being proved as ever. Free will, I agree, is only possible if interactionism is true, but the latter is no evidence for the former. Every presumption is against your theory and you have no jot of evidence to support it. Determinism holds the field in every science and will continue to do so until its opponents bring some evidence to show that their theory is more than a pure assumption.

FREEMAN. Experimental psychology has not yet been able to test the question, but introspection throws some light upon the subject which, little as it is, is the only direct evidence there is on either side. In our decisions there *seems* to be an element of choice. It may be that this is a valid introspection and informs us of what really takes place.

KOHLNSTOFF. Oh, we were waiting for you to fall into that trap! I have never met an

indeterminist yet that didn't do so sooner or later. The only positive argument ever brought forward for free will is the old cry: "I can't help sort of feeling that I can choose to do one thing or another as I please." But for this feeling no one would ever have dreamed of such an absurdity as a man's choosing without a motive or against a stronger motive. And this, your main reliance, yes, your only one, is a simple fallacy! Any number of things "seem as though" they were other than they are in reality. The sun seems to revolve about the earth, the earth itself seems flat, the water in a basin may seem hot to one hand and cold to another. We live in a world packed with illusions and the knowledge of the truth does not destroy the feeling of illusion. Our perceptions are valueless when not confirmed by the results of scientific reasoning, and it is the recognition of this that makes what we call the scientific attitude of mind. Psychology supplies us with a hundred instances of illusion, any of which is of fully as much evidential value as the much talked of "feeling of freedom." Moreover this feeling does not appear to be found in everyone, and where it occurs it may differ vastly in degree.

FREEMAN. After all this rhetoric, it is a shame to be compelled to state that I do not

regard the direct evidence from consciousness as the strongest evidence for free will. But I will not admit that this evidence is to be thrown out of court without examination. It is true that *our* perception of the motion of the sun is of little value when unchecked by astronomy, but even an astronomer would not be uninterested in the sun's account of *itself*. Faulty as it is, introspection is always of interest in psychology and in some cases it is the only method that can be applied. We must wait many years before the laboratory can decide the question of free will, and in the meantime the testimony of introspection supports its truth.

KOHLNSTOFF. But in this case the testimony of consciousness can be shown to be mistaken. You yourself admit that our intuitions on the subject altogether exaggerate the extent of our freedom. We feel free entirely when making a choice, but no sane man, even though he may believe in free will, can maintain that heredity and environment have no effect at all. Now if our consciousness can exaggerate so grossly, why cannot it lie outright quite as easily? And what about those persons who do not have your "sense of freedom"; a type not infrequently found especially among scientifically trained men? Are the introspections of Huxley, who did not believe in free will, of



less value than those of the majority who rely most upon their "feeling of freedom"? As a matter of fact, the obstinate illusion of free choice is counteracted by a training in science. You yourself restrict freedom to narrower limits than a savage or an uneducated man. Education largely consists in learning to know and feel the forces which have made us what we are.

FREEMAN. I admit that the part played by free choice in our mental life is much exaggerated by consciousness. But the errors of consciousness are more commonly of degree than of kind. Because a little fire may create a big smudge it does not follow that where there is smoke there is no fire. I do not think, either, that the absence of the perception of choice means the absence of the fact. I simply incline to the side that has the majority of introspections in its favor.

DENKER. I am as democratic as you in politics, but we cannot determine questions of science by counting heads. The bulk of introspections you are welcome to, we will content ourselves with the weight. Those scientists who have closely examined the feeling of "choice" have found a simpler and truer explanation for it than the revolutionary doctrine of indeterminism. I believe the feeling of which you speak to consist essentially in a

certain sense of straining or effort. It is because and when a decision is made with difficulty that we think we are acting freely. Now this can be thoroughly and satisfactorily explained as a case of energy lost in overcoming a smaller force with a greater, and need not at all be set down as a putting forth of effort to overthrow the stronger force on behalf of the weaker. I think you were right in not relying too much on your "sense of freedom," for it is a broken reed if there ever was one. But what other argument have you?

FREEMAN. Two small points in connection with this matter occur to me. First, this feeling of effort is interpreted as choice by almost all of those who have it. In the second place, this feeling occurs just when we might expect free choice, when consciousness is intense, self-regardful and unstably balanced. Besides, your calm assumption that all the people who have a right to an opinion on the matter accept the determinist account of the sense of freedom is almost annoying. Some savages believe in chance, but how many more in fate! Over all primitive literature hangs its shadow —

DENKER. Fatalism is one thing and scientific determinism is another.

FREEMAN. Surely. And equally removed is modern indeterminism from the "chance"

and "miracle" of the savage. The indeterminism of to-day is no left-over from Thomas of Aquino, but a critical philosophy which would not have been possible before Darwin and most of the arguments for which depend upon the progress in psychology during the past twenty-five years.

## THE SIXTH QUESTION

*How might freedom have come about?*

KOHNSTOFF. Did somebody say Darwin? I am glad that you chose of your own "free will" to wander into the fields of biology, though I think fate must have had its share in delivering you into the hands of the fowler in that way. If you had assumed that free will was a mysterious entity inserted into the personality at some stage of existence, it would be hard to disprove your case (although impossible, of course, to prove it), but if the will, like the rest of consciousness, is a product of evolution, the possibility of its freedom is gone once for all. Uncaused or (if you insist on the term) self-caused action is of another dimension from caused action and can no more arise from it than figs can grow from thistles. If it be true that some actions are indeterminate, they are unique, unprecedented actions indeed. When did this strange power to "indeterminate" arise? How did it ever come about? Is it confined to man? Is it found in all men? At what time does it arise in the in-

dividual? Where does it come from and whither does it go when we return to the humdrum life of normal causation? How does so considerable an interruption of the order of the universe leave such doubtful and dubious traces? They used to tell us that "nature does not make leaps," but if she can leap from the causal order to the—"uncausal order" shall I say? — why she outrivals her own grasshoppers!

FREEMAN. People make just the same objection to immortality, that since we cannot fix the point in the life history of the individual or the species when consciousness became a permanent thing, therefore it never did so. But that objection would apply just as strongly to many other elements of consciousness which we all know exist without being able to time them exactly: sight, hearing, memory, imagination, reason, the ethical and esthetic instincts, the will, consciousness itself. At one time these were not; now they are.

KOHLNSTOFF. I beg your pardon, but the cases you point to are not at all analogous. All of the elements of life you mentioned came into being gradually, they were developed by centuries or even by millions of years. The basis of our entire mental life is found in all living matter; possibly in all matter. Many philosophers have found the roots of the will

in the inorganic realm. Evolution is not a creation out of nothing, but an unfolding of what already exists in the germ. But with free will the case is different. Causality does not admit of more or less; free will exists or it does not,—at one bound it springs from nothingness to being. Indeterminism may be an exception to evolution; it is certainly no example of it. In other cases science has reduced seeming differences of kind to mere differences of degree. Thus organic species, once thought fixed and permanent, are now held to be branches from a common trunk. Even the elements have but a relative individuality it now appears, since radium appeared upon the scene to show us a new “origin of species” in the inorganic world. But the difference between the caused and the uncaused (*or* self-caused) is no difference of degree but of kind, and no evolutionary bridge is long enough to connect the two.

FREEMAN. For all I know to the contrary, freedom may be as old as consciousness itself, though only becoming important in man. But if, as I think more probable, it did have an origin at a definite time, it is but one case of the birth of personality. Evolution does not mean that there are no differences in kind, simply that at a certain point of development a difference in degree becomes one in kind. It

is hard to tell at just what point we have a new species, but there is a degree of difference beyond which varieties will not cross. It is hard to tell just when self-consciousness arises, but there is a difference in kind between persons that we all recognize. As to our inability to detect the presence of free will in a given conscious state, this is paralleled by the difficulty in analyzing any complex mental process. But at least we can pick out the cases in which free action might occur; moments, namely, of choice with effort. Nor is there any reason why a free act should show its nature by any external peculiarity, for the indetermination of the will is but a small part of any mental state, even when a controlling one.

But to return to the main question: when is freedom possible? I do not know; I hazard the guess that its origin approximated that of self-consciousness and reason. All we can say at present is that at a certain stage of instability, complexity and self-dependence of the will-state it is possible. The only way to locate it with certainty would be to calculate all the forces tending to determine action and then see if the action which occurs is invariably what we predict.

## THE SEVENTH QUESTION

*How is freedom related to the sciences of man?*

MANTELLER. That's the true method! Of course we do not yet possess absolute knowledge of the laws which govern our life, but we know enough to be sure that such laws exist. We cannot as yet determine each individual act, but we do know and can tell in advance the big factors that make for social action. Some freewillists talk about the impossibility of reducing human action to the certainty of biology or physics. We can do more, we can reduce it to the certainty of mathematics. Of all human choices, what is more important, unique, individual, unpredictable and proverbially erratic than the affairs of love? Yet "the way of a man with a maid" is laid down in hundreds of tables of the marriage rate. We can follow every rise and fall of marriage rate, birth rate, death rate, suicide rate, criminality rate, and trace each to its cause with as much certainty as if we were dealing with curves of pressure, temperature, density, boiling points or solubility products. We know the factors which



make wages rise and fall as we know those which make the mercury in a barometer rise and fall. We can predict changes in prices far more accurately than changes in the weather, and panics are no more mysterious than trade winds and come as regularly. Every teacher, every politician, every criminologist, every physician, every successful business man bases his methods on the known and assured laws of human nature in the mass. And yet scientific economics is no older than Adam Smith, sociology not so old as that, experimental psychology younger yet and scientific history hardly in existence! In a century more the social sciences may expect to accomplish almost anything in the way of predicting human conduct, judging from the record of the past twenty years. Do not think that this applies only to the "masses" not yet raised to the free will level. Galton, Wood, Ostwald and many others have examined the origins of genius and shown conclusively that great men are simply the carriers of a great heredity. We know ethics now to be a question of "mores," of customs adopted, consciously or instinctively, to ensure group survival. The origins and laws of religious experience are well understood. Even esthetics is being reduced to a science, and not even our tastes and idiosyncrasies can maintain themselves as exceptions

to law. Science which has driven chance forever from the domain of inorganic and organic nature will not suffer it to remain in the most important branches of knowledge, the knowledge of human relationships. Even now, in practice, everyone reckons upon the predictability and rationality of the conduct of others while cherishing free will for himself alone! Of course our own actions, however they may seem to us at the time, are as determined as our neighbors' obviously are.

FREEMAN. I accept your challenge to set limits to the power of the social sciences to predict with certainty. Let us assume (no hard assumption for you, at least, to make) that all human action is in reality determined. Even so, could we ever be in a position to predict the future with any approach to certainty? The first limit lies in the complexity of the subject. Man's will is affected by physical, chemical and biological factors, and so until we know all about natural science we can not even begin to predict human conduct with certainty. Again, in studying the sources of the will we are studying the very core of our being, not some outside reality which is not affected by the act of analysis. The third limit is a time limit. That which holds good to-day as a "law of human nature" is subject to rapid and increasingly rapid evolution. Could we perfectly

comprehend the world as it stands to-day our conclusions would be out of date before we could get them all on paper. Finally, a perfect science of human behavior would need to keep its conclusions secret lest they fall into the hands of someone who would be displeased by them and would act differently "just to show" that he could. Now all of these possibilities, that of failing to understand certainly all of the million factors which determine conduct, of misreading one's own mind, of not fitting the science of human behavior to a constantly accelerating rate of change in its subject matter, of letting somebody know the conclusions of the science who would be repelled by them, all are independent of any possibility of free choice. Yet they will forever make an exact study of human conduct before it happens impossible, and only in that way can determinism ever be conclusively proved.

MANTELLER. It is sufficient that we can predict human behavior closely enough to make free will improbable. Many things, such as witchcraft, cannot be disproved by showing that no such things have ever happened in any part of the universe at any time. Science has nothing to do with such fantastic possibilities as witchcraft, free will or any other miracle, and simply ignores them in practice. Upon the theory of determinism are built the great sci-

ences that deal with man, and upon no other foundation can they be laid.

FREEMAN. But the sciences of man do not deal with individual relations. You might study a curve of the marriage rate a long time before finding out whether or not Miss Smith would marry Mr. Wilson. In curves taking only a few cases into consideration there are variations as significant as their uniformities.

MANTELLER. All such variations fall within a small margin when enough cases are considered. Could we view a chemical reaction as a mass and at the same time follow the course of each individual atom we would have a close parallel with our human situation. The reaction in the mass is absolutely uniform and regular and conforms in every particular to natural laws which can be put in the form of mathematical equations. But could we trace the atoms at the same time — what a difference! Moving and mixing, joining and parting, a hurly-burly of whirling points apparently subject to no law but chance desire, the atoms would seem as free as any human being could wish to be. But for science the first aspect, the reaction in mass, is the true and significant one. So in human society. The “atoms” here are so large and complex and like ourselves that we notice individual variations more than general laws. But the laws

exist none the less. We human atoms have no more right to think ourselves free from the universal rule of law than our lesser brethren in a test-tube.

FREEMAN. You forget that human uniformity is not half so great as it seems to be, for cases of free will may balance each other. Suppose that in one year 43 burglars committed crimes which they need not have committed and 39 persons were tempted to steal but refrained. Then the variation from the expected "burglary rate" due to free choice would be only 43 minus 39 or four. These four cases could safely be ignored among perhaps a thousand and then you would tell a free-willist: "See, crime is invariably determined by social factors and not by free choice, for the year's burglary rate is almost exactly that which any criminologist would have predicted." But in those uniform figures no less than 82 cases of freedom would lie hidden. Consciousness may over-estimate the extent of free will but not so grossly as statistics must always underestimate it.

MANTELLER. You say I "underestimate" free will! Why, you have just shown that free will is impossible. If free actions can nullify each other and reduce down to an average, then conditions will be just the same whether free will is true or not; in other words, free will

is impotent and without meaning. What's more, since free acts are causeless and happen at random, they will occur according to the law of chance distribution and thus lawlessness itself is subject to law. In the long run chance itself, could it occur, would be as regular in its action as anything else.

FREEMAN. As far as the mere numbering of free acts goes you are right enough. But number is one of the least important things about human actions. When an employer returns to his office after an absence he does not ask his clerk: "How many things have you done in my absence?"; he asks, rather, "What have you done in my absence?" Even if atoms had free will (which I don't believe) it would matter very little, for what a single atom can accomplish is rather limited in scope. In some reactions, it is true, an atom can play an important part, but this role is always a rather simple one and, since atoms commonly travel in bunches, some would be pretty sure to play it. But human beings rise or fall in the scale of evolution by a succession of decisions. These decisions may be free or they may be determined, but to say that they are merely examples of chance distribution and hence can "nullify" each other, is just as if one would say that a spark which sets off a powder explosion is nullified by the fact that another

spark did not. A thousand sparks scattered at random in a powder factory, and a thousand free decisions are both cases of the "law of chance distribution," but —!

## THE EIGHTH QUESTION

*Are heredity and environment omnipotent?*

MANTELLER. We are getting to close grips at last. These decisions you speak of are interactions of heredity and environment and nothing else. Of course these factors differ in different individuals and hence arise all the so-called exceptions to the laws of human action. But these individual differences are not beyond the power of science to explain, not as exceptions to our laws but as instances of them. It is estimated that children of eminent parents have one thousand times the chance of becoming eminent that ordinary children have. The tables of heredity are being worked out with such completeness that no human character is longer a mystery to any trained anthropologist in possession of the hereditary facts. Never a deviation in thousands of recorded cases from the results to be expected from Mendel's laws! Not only the character of the individual but that of the race is a function of the unalterable physical basis of heredity. The only permanent advances have been made through the selection of superior types. All advances in



civilization which do not possess this hereditary security depend upon the educating of each new generation and without it they are lost forever. No stream can rise higher than its source, and defectives will never breed anything else than defectives forever.

Of course environment is of influence, too, but it can merely patch and color the fabric given to it. Material conditions are perhaps the fundamental environmental influences. Modern history shows us how classes, laws, governments, customs, morals and the like are in every case only explainable on the basis of economic necessity. Thus, slavery and polygamy arise and are considered right when natural conditions make them necessary. When these conditions change, they become unpopular and hence "wrong." Democracy and monogamy replace them when the increasing command of man over nature makes slave labor and wholesale domestic labor unprofitable. There is no fact in history for which no adequate explanation can be found, to explain which we must suppose free choice.

It is not different in the case of an individual. The most unaccountable actions become clear in proportion as we study a man's parents, his early training and all the features in the situation in which he acted. Let each of us look back upon the course of his life,

trace the peculiar features in his character to his ancestors, consider the influence of past experience upon our more recent actions and we find there is no room left for the arbitrary "will" to play its part. When we make a decision we may not notice the factors determining it at the time, but upon looking backward how clearly it stands out! Free will cannot be true, for between heredity (which makes our characters) and the forces of environment (which determine in what concrete acts our in-born tendencies shall issue) there is nothing left to explain.

FREEMAN. I admit everything, that is, almost everything. We do not come into the world as "blank sheets of paper" but as closely written pages, very hard to alter later. Environment may choke off all our chances of growth and leave us like savages or it may force our latent capacities to the uttermost. I admit that ninety-nine per cent. of our lives pass without any act of will at all, free or not; that free will can only exist when there is some balancing of motives (a rare occurrence); and, finally, that when we might act freely we hardly ever do. But free will may exist none the less. Many a discovery have scientists made by looking in the fourth decimal place. Many a rare chemical has been found in flue dust or rubbish heap. Many a law and theory of ancient

authority has been overthrown by some little exception it could not cover. No true scientist will deny free will on the ground that heredity and environment are important factors in our lives, any more than he will deny the existence of radium because oxygen is some billion times more common. So in a question like this, the real test is the seeming exception. We all know that there are persons of good parentage and admirable training who do turn out badly, and others,—children of paupers or criminals and educated under conditions which would ruin most children,—who end among the saints. Such cases are, no doubt, the exception but — there they are.

MANTELLER. We do not always know which environment and which heredity are the best. By “superior type” the eugenicist does not mean the rich or titled; often quite the contrary. He means the type, wherever found, which is eugenically superior, which does in fact produce the healthiest and brainiest persons.

FREEMAN. Very true. But this very difficulty of locating the best heredity and environment in a given case makes it impossible to prove determinism in that way. Besides, in defining the superior type as that which produces the superior persons you are begging the question a little. You take the superior per-

son and put him among the eugenic types. *Then* you say that his ability and virtue are completely accounted for by the fact that he is a eugenic type. But the character is not a static but a dynamic affair; it varies as the result of decisions. From a good man we look for good acts, and so we are not surprised at hearing of some noble deed in the past. We say, "of course, that's just like him." But we may not be right in assuming that the man's present self was always what it is now. His present character may have been the result of past decisions made in the face of strong temptation. That we do good because we are good is only half of the truth. We are good because we do good.

History does look ordered and arranged when we look back upon it. We say for instance: "The German is naturally scientific, efficient and militaristic. No wonder Germany has produced its Fredericks and Bismarcks, its Kants and Haeckels." But we forget to ask whether Germany would be such fertile soil for certain kinds of talent if no one had first prepared the soil. In the Middle Ages Germany was not especially interested in science; the Holy Roman Empire was no model of efficient government; in the days of Napoleon the standing army was a standing joke. Again hundreds of solemn historians set it down as a

law of nature that the French people are especially fickle and insubordinate and so it is only natural that they should have started so many revolutions and that their ministries change every few months. But there was a time when the French people were as law-abiding and submissive as any in Europe, enduring a tyranny for centuries without revolt. If we avoid the easy mistake of reading the past in the terms of the present, past history no longer seems as though it "had to be" just as it was and no otherwise. On the contrary free will seems to me a useful idea for the historian because it helps in some measure to explain the rapidity of human progress. According to many of our leading biologists our hereditary character seems to have been much the same in the latter part of the old stone age that it is now. Our brains have certainly grown no larger, and perhaps no better, in the meantime. Our natural environment has not varied much since the close of the glacial period. Only our social environment has changed. Was this due solely to some happy combination of a good stock and a favorable environment at sometime in the past or did an increase in free choice make us more independent of an unchanging environment and a practically unchanging heredity? The latter theory would account for more than the former.

## THE NINTH QUESTION

*If free will is true, does it matter?*

SMITH. I do not see, Freeman, how you can ascribe such great results to such an insignificant factor as free will seems to be on your own showing. I have noted some of your defences. You are willing to allow "any amount of practical power to the determined forces of nature," you "admit that the part played by free choice in our mental life is much exaggerated by consciousness"; you grant that cases of free will may counteract each other; you "admit that ninety-nine per cent. of our lives pass without any act of will at all"; "that free will can only exist when there is some balancing of motives" (which you well call "a rare occurrence"); and "that when we might act freely we hardly ever do." In short, loyalty to the obvious facts of nature has forced you to make one concession after another till all that is left is the fair, faint chance that somewhere something might go wrong with the law of causality, but that the accident wouldn't be serious enough to damage science. You have

peeled and peeled away at indeterminism till almost nothing is left, and that little, in practice, seems to be indistinguishable from determinism. Free will, as you said, seems to have the rarity of radium, but I do not see that this fact gives it the importance of radium. Your theory is indeed a timid, defenseless one, chiefly occupied in hiding itself from attack; "harmless and useless" as Denker called it. But this very uselessness subjects it to attack from a new quarter, the attack of pragmatism. Pragmatism is an agent from the humane society and its business is to put sick and suffering theories out of their pain. If a theory does not make a real difference, it has no real meaning; it is simply a scholastic quibble. Scientists do look in the fourth decimal place for varied readings and in powder factories for sparks (to use two of your entertaining metaphors), but they do not look for trained elephants under their beds or for sea horses in their coffee. Some possibilities are remote enough and irrelevant enough to be ignored.

Upon the indeterminist showing, how important a factor in our life is this precious free will? It seems to be limited to one species of animals, our own. Then it can only be found in those highly exceptional individuals who sometimes decide matters by deliberate consideration and choice. Thirdly, freedom is con-



fined to one phase of mental life, deliberate willing. Fourthly, according to most indeterminists, it occurs only in cases of moral willing. Temptation must be strong. It must not be too strong; we must get that "balance of forces" you are always insisting upon. There are several other limitations, but I really haven't time to list them all. Take the rare exceptional case when we might have free choice. As you admitted, we usually don't even then. Suppose it does occur. Why, even then (I quote you) "the indetermination of the will is but a small part of any mental state." Of course this must be so. The "freest" act imaginable is almost altogether a question of brain habits, nerve habits and muscle habits. Even in the mind itself the "free" part of the will is lost in a roaring tempest of motives, habits and impulses. It is a factor too small for psychology to find. According to this picture of free will as painted by its friends, the influence of all the indeterminate actions since the world was created comes to less than the influence of the dog-star on a presidential election.

FREEMAN. I think that some indeterminists underestimate the extent of free will just as others overestimate it. For instance there is no need to confine the role of free choice to ethical decisions. Choices involving questions



of right and wrong, while different in nature from others, are not special cases psychologically. Wherever there is choice there may be free choice. Wherever there is choice-with-effort there is probably some element of freedom, though it is not always the determining factor. It is true that choices are rare and when they do occur the indeterminate part of the will is only one small factor in the total conscious state. But it may none the less be the controlling one. You seem so fond of my images that I will provide you with another one. You know from your chemistry that there are many substances which can be mixed together in a pure dry state without combining, but upon the introduction of a grain of dirt or a drop of water will unite at once. There are many instances other than this of a small cause producing a great effect. Take a supersaturated solution of some salt. If the solution is left alone the salt will not precipitate. But introduce a single crystal of that salt and a heavy precipitation will result. Or again, take the case of an explosion in which a single explosive cap may set off tons of combustible material. In these cases we have good analogies to the action of free choice.

KOHLNSTOFF. We know these facts as well as you, but do you mean to say that the mind is a mixture of explosive gases, a salt solution

or simply a stick of dynamite? Metaphors are good as illustrations but rather indifferent as substitutes for argument.

FREEMAN. The instances I have given are more than mere metaphors. They all illustrate a principle, as true in consciousness as anywhere else; if any system be unstable enough, any force, however small, may throw the whole system into another form. Freedom is but a small element at any time, but since, if it occurs at all, it occurs at just those times when the self is in a "critical" state (as we say in physics) it may be a controlling one. Its infinitesimal "push" upsets the delicate balance of forces and rearranges the whole structure of the will, which then gives its fiat and passes over into a stable state of decision. The trace of indetermination in our consciousness cannot of itself accomplish action but it is perhaps capable of releasing other and larger forces able to produce action.

SMITH. Even granting that free will might cause an act now and then, such cases must be too rare to matter. Especially does free will seem to be unimportant in the field of ethics, although when urged at all it is usually urged on ethical grounds. If it is true that morality means moral responsibility and moral responsibility depends upon free will, this only shows how unimportant morality is! Evidently it

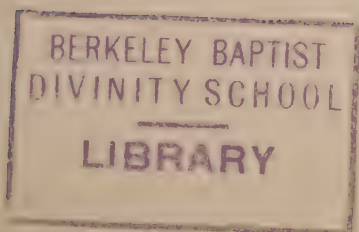
has little or nothing to do with good or bad conduct, since by the free will standard the vicious degenerate who resists one temptation in the course of a lifetime is a whole moral heaven above the man who has formed a habit of well doing and could no more wrong another than jump over a house. To the freewillist virtue depends for its existence upon temptation and exists as little in the saint whose noble impulses and profound conviction of the right raise him above temptation as in the moral weakling unable to resist it. This is going "beyond good and evil" with a vengeance! Free will seems doomed to disappear along with the evil impulses that gave rise to it. In the meantime we are to be saved or lost, not according to the general character of our lives, but according to the ratio between our good "free" acts and our bad ones, even though we may not have acted freely ten times in a lifetime. Honestly, is it worth while our keeping up heaven and hell and "moral responsibility" just for that? Why exhaust one's brain trying to save an infinitesimal "freedom" to a universe which has no use for it?

FREEMAN. I have already shown that the rarity of free will is no argument against its existence. Just as little is it an argument against its importance. It was not I who called freedom "harmless and useless." Not

only is freedom at times very useful, but it may be in the highest degree harmful. I said (and it is quite true) that the theory of free will can work no harm to science. I never denied that wrong decisions might wreck human lives. Freedom is more to be feared than any force of nature, because if we are lost on *its* account we have only ourselves to blame. Unimportant acts are usually matters of routine and are taken care of by instinct and habit. Reflective decision and deliberate choice are characteristic of the crises and turning points of our lives. A single free decision may start a long train of causes and effects which may determine the whole after life of a man or of a nation. The importance of free action extends itself to all the results which flow from it.

As to the ethical question, it is quite true that *moral* good or evil depends upon free choice. But it does not follow that only for free acts can we be held responsible. We are responsible not only for our use of free choice but for our power of using it. Wherever we *could* act freely we are justly responsible if we don't. This potential freedom of ours is probably a thousand times as great as our actual freedom. Again, while we cannot take credit for the "virtue of our ancestors" or for our environment, yet just so far as our character is the result of free decision all acts

which flow from it are responsible acts whether free or not. No one can deliberately form bad habits and hope to escape blame by pleading that he was in the grip of a habit and could no longer help himself. Justice places the blame on the man who formed the habit, of course. If free will is true, the sphere of moral responsibility is great indeed, though only God knows how great. Neither grant nor deny freedom on the ground that "it doesn't matter." If true, it *does* matter and it's going to matter more in the future. Finally, you are wrong in saying that the virtuous man has no temptations and so needs no free will. It is like saying that a wise man has no intellectual difficulties and so does not need to think. As the will is set free from coarse temptations it has its own battles to wage and conquests to make on levels undreamed of by our weaker moral imaginations.



## THE TENTH QUESTION

*Does necessity show itself in the products of the mind?*

RITER. On the highest levels of imagination man stands and looks at the winding course of human life and sees nothing but the reign of universal law. From the old Greek dramatists to Ibsen and Thomas Hardy all great art has been distinguished by the one sure mark of "inevitability." A poor novel almost always is one in which the events seem glued on to the characters instead of springing naturally from them as a tree bears fruit after its kind. A good novel is an unfolding of character and a revelation of the inevitable consequences of its growth. There is no need to multiply examples; you know that this is so.

FREEMAN. It is true that in a realistic novel events do occur only as they have been forecasted in character. But the merit of a book does not consist in our reading the last page in the first. The greatest novels and dramas, it seems to me, deal with choices which determine at once the event and the future charac-

ter of the agent. Of course we must except books and plays written to prove determinism. The Greek drama started with the avowed purpose of revealing the workings of Nemesis and of exploiting the sense of doom for artistic purposes. The modern realist, Zola for example, sets out to prove that his puppets are moved by strings of heredity and environment. He does prove it so far as his book-world goes, but we are no more bound to accept his conclusions as true of real life than you would be bound to accept my verdict if I wrote a book to prove free will.

RITER. That is not quite a parallel case, Freeman, for (excuse me) you are not a great artist. But you miss my meaning. I did not say that realistic novels need be true to life. I meant that since the highest products of the mind are subject to necessity it is not probable that the mind which created them was lawless. If you think that all the logic of tale or drama has no other object than to "prove determinism," you are to be pitied. But artistic logic can be seen in fields where even you would not look for concealed Calvinists. Did Beethoven write his music just to prove that each note suggests the next? He did show it as do all great musicians, but the importance of their testimony is increased by the fact that it is altogether unconscious. It is so in painting.

From a painting of one of the great masters not a line or a shade could be altered without harming the whole effect. All arts have a subtle mathematics which no machine in the world but the artist's brain can follow, but which any artist will tell you exists. Machine-made art is bad because it is crude, not because it is determined. Perfect art has perfect unity, perfect determination. Do not be misled by careless use of the term "inspiration." If a poem is genuinely inspired, the proof of the fact lies in the unvarying use of the one right word to express the idea. Nothing is more clearly determined than art of the highest type and yet if we are to look for freedom from the universal rule of law anywhere it would surely be in the play of the imagination.

DENKER. Riter has well expressed one form of a final and conclusive answer to all indeterminist argument. Not only has artistic creation its logic, but so has all thought. If a man thinks correctly, he thinks logically; if he thinks logically, he thinks in a determined manner. Logic and mathematics are the very type of determinism; and the sounder thought is, the closer it approaches to them. While you have been arguing with a zeal worthy of a better cause for free will, you have been unconsciously proving determinism all along. Each argument has come to you as the one best way of answer-



ing the argument you have just heard. An argument like this runs in as exact a channel as any river. And if free will plays no part, as it does not, in scientific thinking, how much part would it play in the more instinctive and habitual mental processes of daily life?

FREEMAN. In the first place rigorous logic is rather rare; I have come across very few specimens of syllogistic thinking outside of a textbook. In the second place one may always choose whether to pursue a given line of thought or drop it. In the third place, and this applies especially to Riter's "artistic necessity," there are several equally true ways of developing an idea. Finally, incomplete induction, the most useful kind of logical thought, not only may but must involve choice, and this choice may be as free as any other kind of choice. For myself, I have made many deliberate selections of arguments in the course of this talk and, for that matter, so have you.

## THE ELEVENTH QUESTION

*Is free will necessary to the police?*

DENKER. Apparently "free" logic is just like any logic. This is fortunate for you, since if undetermined thinking were in any way different from determined thinking, its validity might be open to question. But the lack of any apparent difference between the two is somewhat awkward in the moral sphere. For how can you judge a man's conduct if you don't know when he is free and when he isn't?

LAWES. Just what I wanted to ask. I am glad that Denker brought the matter up. Before punishing anybody, if we wanted to deal "justly" on free will principles, we would have to take him before a committee of expert psychologists who would determine the extent of his "responsibility" after consulting with the departments of sociology and eugenics. Even then there would be frequent judicial errors in dealing with so elusive a factor as free will. It would be impossible to run the law in such fashion and our barbaric attempts (now fortunately being abandoned by civilized countries)

to base punishment on a vindictive basis only result in useless suffering. A prison should be regarded simply as a hospital for contagious moral diseases. When we condemn a man it is not necessary for us to pass judgment on his character, it is enough that we should lock him up as a dangerous moral lunatic who can perhaps be improved by a better environment, and in any case can be prevented from doing further damage. Only on such a basis can we have a sane criminal law.

FREEMAN. But we do regard lunatics and sane people differently. To be logical you should hang an insane murderer as readily as a sane one, perhaps more readily since a lunatic may kill at any time for the sake of killing, whereas a sane criminal will perhaps never have need or desire to kill more than once.

LAWES. There are two reasons why we treat insane criminals as special cases. One is the superstition of "responsibility" which is luckily dying out but must be reckoned with, like all superstitions, while it lasts. The other reason is a real reason. A sane man can be deterred by punishment from committing crime, an insane man rarely can. This is true responsibility and the one true reason for punishment. If punishment will prevent future wrong, it should be inflicted; if not, it is nothing but wanton cruelty. We should regard

punishment only as the pain which a surgeon must inflict in an operation. A surgeon does not ask whether a man broke his leg from carelessness or from sheer accident in deciding whether or not he must operate; he will operate in any case if it is necessary, and if not, not. So with the death penalty. We do not try to determine the exact nature and extent of the "guilt" of a snake or a tiger; we do not condemn it for its deeds, which, after all, were only the law of its nature; we kill simply and solely for safety's sake. Stevenson tells of a little devil who said that it would be absurd to punish him as it was his nature to do wrong and he never could help himself. The judge agreed and so had him hung. Now a freewillist judge would have decided that in that case the devil was "not to blame" (and no more he was) and let him go to commit further mischief. So far from the police needing the doctrine of free will to direct their labors, they wouldn't know what to do with it.

FREEMAN. I fear I have often disappointed you by not taking the positions you thought I should have occupied. I have listened with great interest to Mr. Lawes, but I have agreed with his main contention from the start. No human court can determine the exact measure of our responsibility for the course of our lives. I believe in justice, but I believe also that only

God can be really just, for He alone knows all of the facts. The aim of the criminal law is to protect the rights of each citizen, not to emulate the last judgment.

LAWES. Your common sense, I see, is reasserting itself. But you seem to have gone over to us on the legal question, horse, foot and guns. If free will is not used to secure the credit of the law of what use is it; where *does* it make any difference?

## THE TWELFTH QUESTION

*What difference does a belief in free will make  
in our daily life?*

SMITH. Mr. Lawes is a sensible man and he has led us for the first time to the root of the matter: what difference would it make to us if free will were true? You have told us, Freeman, that free will cannot be disproved, and, frankly, we don't seem to have done so to your satisfaction. You have said that free will may be true and presented arguments to show its plausibility, although (again frankly) you do not seem to have convinced any of *us*. You have said that although free will looks like a small thing, it may have important effects. But you have not told us what difference its being true would make, nor what difference it would make to us whether we believed in it or not. You have just admitted that freedom is an empty question in a court of law. Well, where else, then, would it be important? What could you do with the notion of freedom in a laboratory? What science would find a use for the belief?

Could you use the notion to advantage in a schoolroom? I don't see that you would bring up a child any differently from believing the doctrine of free will, since, as you pointed out, we can't predict the future of any individual in any case. Just how would a freewillist's history differ from a determinist's? You couldn't use it to explain any particular event, since there appears, on your admission, to be no touch-stone to tell a determined act from a chance one. How does one regulate one's domestic life any differently by this belief? What do you do with it at the polls? Does it play any part in war, finance, housekeeping, literature, art, bootblackening, burglary, medicine, fishing or what? Have any of us ever done anything as a result of thinking that what we were about to do was or was not determined? A freewillist theologian or essayist will *talk* differently from the rest of us on that one point. This is the single difference in anyone's conduct which I have ever observed as a result of any belief upon the matter. William James, the greatest champion free will ever had, used to say that there was no difference which did not make a difference. If the practical results of two beliefs are identical, any distinction between them is without genuine reality. Determinism is a useful postulate in scientific work. That you admit. But free will seems to have no task

to perform as a theory and hence no excuse for existence. There are too many drone-theories in the world already. In the laboratory I am a determinist and so are you. When I am not using causality in some way the whole question becomes as vague as the old dispute about the hen and the egg, and as indifferent either way as the dance of the alleged angels on the supposititious point of the imaginary darning-needle.

FREEMAN. The result of the *truth* of freedom may be good, bad or indifferent; it may be great or small. That depends upon choice and so from its very nature cannot be foretold. Even to indicate the role of freedom in the past would require more knowledge than anyone possesses. But the effects of a sincere *belief* in freedom I can tell you. Briefly, the practical advantage of believing in free will, if you conscientiously can, is the development in you of the three free will virtues: hope, fear and doubt.

SMITH. I see that you are reluctant to despair of your case and I trust that your hope of winning it is modified by a little wholesome fear, but I don't see how you can put in any claim to the possession of the third virtue, for you are certainly the most dogmatic man I ever met.

GOTTLIEB. I can see how hope is a virtue and I can see how a belief in free will might help it. But how can doubt or fear be virtues?



Certainly they are irreconcilable with the virtue of faith. And charity, the greatest of all the virtues, is certainly aided if we believe that "to know all is to pardon all."

FREEMAN. Perhaps I expressed myself too abruptly. I mean intellectual rather than moral virtues, though they may have moral effects. And my dogmatism (which is mild enough compared to that of some of you) is limited in certain matters by my belief in free will, and so you ought to be thankful that I do take that view. But to treat the virtues in order. When a man is in the grip of an evil habit it is of enormous importance that his motto be: "It is never too late to mend." If determinism is true, it is conceivable that a soul may be crushed and ruined beyond redemption, or, in theological language, damned. But if free will be true, there is always a chance, however faint. Weak as the will may be, it can strive a little — always. If this is done, the will is strengthened thereby a little and the next step is made easier, so that a soul may climb to heaven from the very floor of hell. Many a man has felt himself so in the grip of an evil heredity and environment that he seemed condemned as to a moral death. No consistent freewillist could ever feel that way. Given even the faintest desire, or the possibility of arousing that desire, for righteousness and the most

mountainous obstacles may be overcome as continents are worn away by water drops. The determinist will at the most fight with the courage of despair and die in the last ditch. But the freewillist will fight with the courage of the forlorn hope and never "say die" if his creed is really part of him.

GOTTLIEB. But doesn't "It is never too late to mend" lead to carelessness? Only too often people will say "I can take a drink or leave it," "I can stop when I want to" or "I will pull up before I go too far." This confidence in their freedom has ruined many who would never have persevered in evil had they known of the fetters they were forging for themselves. Thus the good of rational hope is undone by the evil of Micawberish optimism. When Rip Van Winkle used to take a drink he would always say "I won't count this once," but he was none the less a slave of his habit because he refused to face the fact of his slavery. In such cases a belief in free will is positively mischievous. Besides determinism does not exclude hope. Good friends, helpful surroundings, wise encouragement will often work wonders. Even when, humanly speaking, a man is beyond redemption, the divine will may accomplish what the human will cannot. "With God all things are possible."

FREEMAN. I admit that this danger of care-

lessness does exist. Of course no rational free will teaching will excuse it. It surely ought to be enough to say to a man: "If you persist in such conduct you are laying up for the future a store of suffering and struggle, you are binding yourself in chains which it will take years to break, you are making the road to self-mastery dark and toilsome," without adding "*All hope abandon, ye who enter here.*" But if anyone will run the frightful risks which the freewillist admits result from forming habits, he will hardly be deterred by the greater threat that determinism holds out. But if too many are led into danger by over-confidence in their power to redeem themselves, even more are ruined by over-confidence that they will never need redemption. By calling fear a free will virtue I mean that no freewillist can ever be an absolute optimist. At most he may believe that things are going well and getting better, he can never deny that they might get worse. We never attain absolute security. We must never rest on our oars. Eternal vigilance is the price not only of freedom but of everything which we hold dear. If despair is impossible to the freewillist, so is quietism. No man or nation can cast all burdens on the Lord, for He has given us the precious burdens of our own destiny for us to carry.

This reminds me of another point. You said

that the determinist was more apt to be charitable than the freewillist. I do not see why the freewillist need be uncharitable as regards others, since he cannot know what temptations may have assailed and been resisted. Charity is as much a duty in ignorant man as justice is in the wise God. But regarding himself the freewillist will not be altogether charitable, for we sometimes do feel conscious of having deliberately sinned. Here the determinist will reflect: "The cosmos was transmitting itself through my act; I was but reacting in a necessary manner to the situation I was in; why should I feel ashamed of myself? I had no alternative." But the freewillist must say: "I was really to blame here, at least in part. I cannot lay all the blame on heredity nor on environment."

SMITH. People are more inclined to praise than to blame themselves. Freewillists tend to lay their faults to the account of heredity, environment and the rest of it just as other people do. This isn't philosophy, it's human nature. But determinists who would like to take credit for the good that is in them are debarred by their belief. All the credit must go to God or to nature. But the freewillist takes credit for his excellence and becomes as self-righteous as the Pharisee. Not to parents, friends,

books, climate, schooling or fatherland do *they* give credit; it all goes to themselves. Once determinism is recognized, "self-made men" will no longer be able to brag and blow, for they will be taught that no one is or can be "self-made." It isn't how much you are responsible for what you are that matters; it is what you are. A determinist will feel ashamed of himself if he has done wrong just as he would feel ashamed of his clothes if he tumbled into the gutter. In either case he will try to clean himself up without regard to any question of "responsibility."

FREEMAN. Of course the determinist will feel unhappy if he has done wrong. In the same manner he will feel happy if he has done well. As you pointed out, what he will care about is not the responsibility but the result. There is nothing of which people are more boastful than their race or family, for which no philosophy holds anyone responsible. To the world no difference is made in modesty or pride by either belief. As to one's own feelings, if a person, after giving due credit to every aid, takes a mite of pride in a good deed or a hard-won triumph, no great harm is done and his taste of moral success may encourage him to further effort. If he takes too much pride in his own effort and underrates what has helped

him, he does so on his own responsibility, and free will is no belief to help anyone dodge responsibility.

GOTTLIEB. This moral pride, even in moderation, keeps us from faith. If we can save ourselves without God's grace, what need have we to trust in Him? A belief in freedom makes the individual a self-sufficient demigod unwilling to believe in the hidden purpose which directs our steps through the maze of apparent evil.

MANTELLER. What's more important, it keeps us from attempting any concrete explanation of human behavior. Free will is not only skepticism in religion, as Gottlieb says, but also in philosophy and science.

FREEMAN. Thank you for reminding me of the third free will virtue, doubt. If we believe that the future is not wholly the product of the past, we must be cautious and conditional in all our prophecies. I am as dogmatic as the next man about how things are. But where the will comes into question my indeterminism makes me careful. I know that I can give no final and complete explanation of how things came about in our present society, nor how they will be to-morrow. I could not talk, as so many determinists talk, of the "inevitable" triumph of my political ideas. I could not condense history into some one theory of race,

climate, class-struggle, genius-production or the like. Determinists who reckon with all the known factors of history may save themselves from this fate, but I make it *impossible* for myself by reckoning in another factor — freedom — a factor indeterminate by its very nature. I say that determinists can avoid such monstrous simplifications of history, but how rarely they do! Marx, Taine, Buckle, Lombroso, Nordau, Nietzsche, Bentham, Owen and so on almost without end — the great men who study history without some such safeguard as a belief in freedom see so clearly the importance of one or two factors that they credit omnipotence to them. The fate of the Manchester economists and the late-lamented “iron law of wages” should be a perpetual warning, but it does not seem to be so. Whatever encourages a mild skepticism in politics, economics, education or any of the human sciences is a good thing in that respect, at least, for it sets a limit to the intolerance and bigotry which have found such rich pasturage in these fields. Too simple remedies follow in the wake of too simple solutions. Socialism, *laissez-faire*, dynamite, classical education, the single-tax, Fourier’s phalanx, conscription, extermination of the “lower races,” universal suffrage, aristocracy, infanticide, hygiene, marriage reform, various religions,—are all proposed by some sincere de-



terminists as infallible remedies for whatever evils afflict humanity. There is nothing to prevent a freewillist from believing in any of these remedies. But it would not be possible for a consistent freewillist to believe that any of these proposals or any others would be cures for all human ills. They could not cover the whole ground, for there is ground that only the will can cover by free and unpredictable choice. We are content to "follow probabilities," as Cicero put it, in human affairs. This accounts for the connection between the belief in free will and in practical freedom.

SMITH. There is such a connection, but it is in an inverse ratio. Freewillists have been, not by exception but almost by rule, champions of class privilege and despotism. Determinists have generally been democratic and liberal. Paradox or not, this is so. The Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches are the strongest champions of free will in existence to-day and at the same time the most consistent opponents of political liberty. You may quote the Turkish power as an illustration of determinist despotism. Well, I ask you, which was more tolerant, the Moorish rule in Spain or the Catholic? In Holland the Arminian party was the party of the aristocracy, the Calvinist that of the people. In Scotland John Knox, in Geneva Calvin, in America Edwards,— these



were the champions of equality and civil liberty. To-day, in every country in Europe, the radicals fall into two main classes: religious determinists such as the British non-conformists and rationalistic determinists such as the French radical republicans and the Russian revolutionists. Compare Holland and Spain, Scotland and Russia, Switzerland and Sicily, colonial New England and Virginia. But for the work of determinists the world would be still enslaved.

FREEMAN. That you have a very strong historical case I won't deny. But wherever Calvinistic churches have been champions of liberty they have also been distinguished by simple ritual and democratic church government. Freewillists in the Unitarian, Congregational, Baptist and Methodist Churches have been just as ardent champions of liberty as any of the believers in predestination. All that these illustrations from church history prove is that established churches tend on the whole to support the *status quo* in the state and that democratic church government is often associated with a desire for democratic political government. There was a time when the Calvinistic Orangemen in Ulster were champions of liberty against the Catholic peasantry who supported King James. To-day the Catholic peasantry are more radical than the Orangemen because

they are poorer. The Stuart fox is overseas, and, however it may have been once, now determinists are no more liberal than freewillists.

SMITH. Oh, yes, they are. Take Mill, as one instance from thousands. There never was a more vigorous champion of philosophical determinism nor of practical liberty. Was there any contradiction there?

FREEMAN. None whatever. But neither was there any connection, so far as Mill or anyone else ever pointed out. There is, however, a direct and admitted connection between Ruskin's determinism and his hatred of liberty. It was he who asked the famous determinist question: "Who would wish the sun to be free?" But he meant it to apply to political liberty. Comte's iron-clad Utopia with all of its social discipline was a direct corollary of his philosophy. Marx's intolerance was identified with his "materialist conception of history." The reason for these things is not to be found in any pun on the word "freedom" or lame analogy between politics and metaphysics, all of which I despise as much as you do. It is simply because those that regard heredity and environment as omnipotent in human affairs are tempted to take short cuts to human perfection through coercive methods. If you can be certain of the good results of a system you will tend to enforce it as rigorously as possible. If

you believe that salvation, after all, must in part be worked out by each individual will, the consistent thing to do is to multiply opportunities for choice and leave a certain free play in all systems, whether eugenic or euthenic, for this purpose.

SMITH. But the old fashioned freewillist believed that freedom, while it was undoubtedly a fact, was a lamentable one and was an additional argument for restraint. Perhaps this accounts in part for the connection which has been so often noted between indeterminism and despotism. To the Catholic theologians (and Protestant as well) freedom was a sort of snake, harmful until charmed. The freewillist Jesuits saw in absolute obedience the one cure for the fell disease of "willfulness."

FREEMAN. Indeed you are right. But, in common with most modern champions of freedom, I differ more from Luther with his hate and fear of the doctrine than from Calvin in his denial of it. Could you convince me that determinism was the truth (which you haven't done yet) as a person of moderate honesty I should have to believe it. But it would be psychologically impossible for me to want to.

DENKER. Then your thought may be unconsciously influenced by your wish.

FREEMAN. Undoubtedly. But the same thing is true and in the same degree of each of

you. You have told me, every one of you, that not only could you not believe in freedom, but you were far from wishing to,—that you detested the very idea of contingency. Each of us is willing to face the truth; there is no conscious self-deceit involved in your case or mine. But how far we are unconsciously influenced by our wishes none of us can say.

LAWES. After all you have said, do you think that freewillists are any better than anybody else?

FREEMAN. In all that I have said I said nothing like that. Being better comes of using freedom, not believing in it. We do not expect as much from a belief as you do. Robert Owen thought that if humanity would all turn determinist, little more would be necessary to bring the millennium. He had his social laws mapped out and that was his remedy for social ills. We do not think that a mere conversion to a belief in freedom would of itself remake the world. All we claim is that indeterminism gives us an added reason for hope when all seems hopeless, an added reason for vigilance when all seems secure and an added reason for caution when human life seems a simple thing to explain or human beings easily molded by a simple method.

GOTTLIEB. One result you have omitted. Granting conduct unpredictable even by divine foreknowledge, we must also grant that man

may defeat the purposes of God, that there is no real security, confidence and certain triumph of the good. In a word, if free will be true, our trust in providence is all a vanity and a lie.

## THE THIRTEENTH QUESTION

### *Can God rule if man is free?*

FREEMAN. No one has the power to defeat God's will.

GOTTLIEB. But if a man's conduct may be in part unforeseeable even by divine wisdom, surely some of God's plans as regards this earth may be halted or even frustrated.

FREEMAN. That is true. We may damn or save ourselves, though hardly the entire universe. God's plans are so broad that no one failure can defeat them. Great wisdom can foresee the possible results of various courses of action even if it cannot foresee the act itself. A chessplayer can be prepared to meet any move of his opponent although to every player, however wise, the move of the other player is sometimes a matter of doubt.

SMITH. When you stole that illustration from William James did you fail to note that if God is the skilled expert, able to meet all possible moves, and free humanity the novice, the practical effect of freedom reduces itself to zero, since it can effect nothing?

FREEMAN. Not at all. Even an inexperienced player can prolong a game by careful moving. The expert can meet any move, but some moves will force him to change his plans.

GOTTLIEB. Well, for my part I am satisfied to leave the game in God's hands and not play against him or try to outwit him. You seem really to prefer a chance of going wrong to a certainty of going right. To exalt your egoism you are willing to risk the triumph of righteousness.

FREEMAN. You should not carry an image too far. We are not playing against God; we are as often as not playing partners. I only meant to show that even choice of evil, ruinous as it is to ourselves, only affects the course of evolution so far as we are concerned. But if we prefer risk to certainty, it is because risk seems to promise us more than certainty. Determinism often leads to pessimism, and with reason. If this is really a block universe with a fixed future, the outlook is not particularly cheery. Huxley, the great determinist, admitted, in fact insisted, that the order of nature was not a moral order and conflicted rather sharply with our ideals. The sun is losing heat, our natural resources are being exhausted, energy is steadily being degraded according to the "second law of thermodynamics," evolution will occasionally work backwards as the facts

of "dysteleology" and degeneracy show. Our triumphs as a race may yet be great; but if they are determined, they are limited. Now let us turn the other side of the shield. The more the future holds of risk, the more it holds of promise. If our fate is in our own hands, we may bungle it; but if we do, it will be our own fault. You cannot be a pessimist if you believe that the future can be changed for the better by your own effort.

KOHLNSTOFF. If the earth should fall into the sun or if the sun should grow cold, free will couldn't help us any.

FREEMAN. Just let nature refrain from killing us off for a few years and then perhaps she can't! After all, supposing God has granted us freedom, have we done so badly with the gift? If free will *has* had any effect upon our past, at least it does not seem to have prevented the most rapid evolution in cosmic history of which we have knowledge. Perhaps, like a good general, God has thrown responsibility on our shoulders as his subordinates and, while running a risk in so doing, the choice has on the whole proved of advantage not only to the soldiers but to the plans of the general. It is not that a general is not wiser than his soldiers, it is not that the statesman is not wiser than the average citizen, it is not that a father is not wiser than his children, that such a thing



as free action exists in our world. It is because it is for the good of people that they do their own choosing and even bungling and so learn from the best of teachers, themselves. This is the meaning of democracy, of political liberty, of free will. God needed our help; it was not enough that we should be his servants, he wished us as his allies. Man's free will cannot defeat God's plans, for man's free will is one of them.

## THE FOURTEENTH QUESTION

*What is the free universe like?*

GOTTLIEB. Then you do not believe in a moral world order?

FREEMAN. I believe in a fighting world order. I see a creative righteousness revealed in the main current of evolution. So clear and evident is this tendency to progress that I can find no other explanation that will fit the facts but a powerful moral will active in the universe. This I call God. It is the only reason I have for believing in any God. Could I find no single ethical purpose in existence, but only an endless weaving and unweaving,—a timeless, aimless, useless pulsation,—I should cease to be a theologian at all, for nothing which I could mean by “God” would appear in it.

GOTTLIEB. How do you account for evil? If God is only a more or less powerful person fighting a more or less powerful Devil, there is no meaning in things, for the unity of the world is broken; God is dethroned from omnipotence and reduced to the proportions of a heathen deity, one among many; all faith is blasted forever, since God may not triumph in the end.

To me evil is but the necessary scaffolding about the divine purpose. "All things work together to the glory of God" to him who has faith. But you lack faith. If anything seems strange to you, you at once put it down as the devil's work. You set up your own petty moral standard, itself a product of the temporary prejudices of your time and place, and with it you pretend to measure the infinite and absolute Standard beyond all time and place. The finite weighs the infinite and calls it wanting! What blasphemous impudence! Can we, in our utter ignorance, judge the Giver of justice? By what right can we call in question the works of the Creator of ourselves as well as of what offends us? Are not our very views of right and wrong imperfect, variable, ephemeral? You say "Be charitable to our neighbor," and next you have made yourself a judge of the mysteries of the universe and tell what is right in it and what is wrong. Even our utterly finite understandings can comprehend that much which is commonly called "evil," bodily pain for instance, is an indispensable good. But for the sharpness of the struggle for existence with all its cruelty, would human evolution have been accomplished? But for sin, would there be righteousness; but for suffering as a contrast and a background, would there be real and vivid happiness? Ask yourself. The road

is open to heaven and you sit down and whine that the way is rough!

FREEMAN. I agree with you that much of the waste and cruelty of nature was a necessary condition of progress. But that is just why I say that God is limited in power. If pain is necessary to insure survival and progress (which I grant) either God chose it to be so or it was in the nature of things that it must be so. I think that God does his best with the materials which exist just as a sculptor must who is given a piece of marble. If there are flaws in the marble there are the same flaws in the statue, however exquisite the workmanship. Given Fact, given matter and its habits, which we call laws, the creative righteousness had to adopt certain means for certain ends, not any means would do for any end. There is no question here of a personal devil, for evil is simply the frustration of that which is good; without desire there is no evil. A personal God is the expression of my belief (and yours) that goodness is something and not anything, that progress has a real meaning. There is no such single counter tendency, though there are many individual eddies produced by the very rush of the current of creative evolution due to the nature of the material substance in which the current acts.

GOTTLIEB. God, according to you, then, is

simply an ethical desire. But he may be more than you realize. There is God, the inspirer of our ideas of right and wrong, it is true, but there is also God the creator, the ruler, the judge, the artist and perhaps an infinite number of things beside. His plans may be hard to understand because they are too big for us to grasp. You cannot bind the Absolute by one of an infinite number of aspects. No doubt our moral views have their place in God's scheme, but they cannot measure the whole of it.

FREEMAN. God's plans may be greater than ours; but unless they *include* ours, what is He but our enemy? If our ideals are valid, that which counters them we must call wicked regardless of its power. If we can deny the existence of evil, we can deny anything. If we admit this evil, we can either regard it as an imperfection, an obstacle,—necessary, perhaps, in the past, but to be destroyed as soon as possible,—an obstacle to God's plans as well as ours; or we can regard it as an expression of God's will and choose between loyalty to conscience and loyalty to God. A God who is limited by evil I can understand and work with, a God in league with evil is not what I mean by the word.

GOTTLIEB. God may be the author of "evil" and yet wish us to fight it. In fact, evil may be here that there may be such a thing as

moral triumph. Were there nothing of evil, good would not exist, just as if all the world were white, we would not know white when we saw it. Evil is a cloud which helps us to understand the sunshine.

FREEMAN. Were all evil of that romantic, helpful sort, did all evil result in good, it would indeed be ungenerous to complain. If all the strife and suffering of life ended in the renewal and heightening of life, as the warriors of Valhalla wound and kill each other all day long only to be restored to health and strength in the evening, then "evil," however painful at the time, might be a wise provision of a good God. But I cannot believe that the battle of Armageddon is only a mock tournament. There are evils that result in no good, past, present, or to come. There is real failure, retrogression, decay. Suffering may elevate and improve, it may degrade and destroy. In looking at the struggle for existence it is not the pain of it that impresses us; that may be borne and joy found in the bearing of it. It is the waste, the uselessness of so much of nature. These things do not give the flavor of contrast to happiness; they poison happiness at its source. Granting that we have made progress on the whole, it has been no triumphal procession or mimic warfare, but a charge

through the thick of every difficulty, a charge always contested and sometimes beaten back. It is true that there are blessings in disguise, but evils come in disguise, too,—wolves in sheep's clothing. Out of matter God made us and lesser things as well. But he needed our help to further the work of the future and so he gave us a small but growing measure of moral freedom.

SMITH. You said that "goodness is something and not anything, that progress has a real meaning." What is that meaning? What can ethical ideas mean as applied to the universe as a whole, apart from our own human needs and interests? When you call God "good" and say that nature includes "evil," what do you imply by the words?

FREEMAN. Progress is differentiation. When I say that a man is "higher" than an ape, an ape than a fish, a fish than a worm, a worm than a clod of earth, I mean in each case more highly conscious, possessed of a greater range of experience, more clearly individual and less dependent upon environment, with greater capacity to enjoy, to know and to choose. It is not that progress is increased complexity. A savage is cumbered with superfluous custom, ritual and ornament with which the civilized man may dispense. Not increased complexity,

but increased capacity is the test, increased selection, increased personality. It is Liberty in the positive sense, the hardest thing in the world to define, but not the hardest to understand. The closest approach to a statement of it that I know is the grand old saying: "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly." Good is whatever furthers this progress, evil whatever hinders. Truth, kindness, just dealing are creative things because they help build up the most important thing in the universe, human character. The best man is he who is most an individual, whose character is most dominated by the unifying factor of the moral will. The man who bends his character to every turn of circumstance by which his selfish immediate interests may profit lowers his personality, his power of choosing because enfeebled, he loses the fulness and definiteness of life like a parasitic insect. He acts by the push of circumstances rather than by the pull of will. But the good man becomes ever more and more a self-chooser. In an infinite, undetermined universe there need be no limit to hope, no limit to growth. Heaven is not a place, but a process, an everlasting process for whoever wills to make it so, of heightening the tide of life and mastering it to subserve our highest wants under the direction of an ever more powerful will.



Philosophers of the world, awake! You have nothing to lose but your chains and you have a world, an illimitable because indeterminate world, to gain!





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